

Narrative by Susan Shwartz

I work in midtown Manhattan in financial services. On September 11, 2001 at the time of the World Trade Center attack, I was in a meeting with several managing directors of the asset-management company where I work.

A secretary interrupted the meeting to tell us that a plane had crashed into one of the towers. We cried out in horror, wondered if our chief economist, who'd been traveling that day, had been on board the plane, and then, because we didn't know what else to do, finished our meeting.

When we came out, we got the rest of the barrage of disaster. I remember, all we could say was "oh my God." I ran to my computer because I knew my online community would be calling the roll, as it does whenever there's a catastrophe. So I sent out e-mail to reassure them that I was okay.

Because I've attended seminars at the Army War College, I knew that Manhattan Island would be sealed immediately. I called some friends who live in Manhattan and told them I wouldn't be able to get home to Forest Hills (in Queens), and I was coming over.

I went to the bank to take out cash in case I needed it. I started walking to Central Park West, found a cab, and grabbed it. Ten blocks later, the cab was stopped by someone with the audacity and deliberate charm you learn in financial services. We played do-you-know — we were all scared since so many people in our industry worked in the World Trade and World Financial Centers — and he paid for the cab.

I showed ID to the policeman guarding the block I was going to. My friends greeted me with hugs and tears. I couldn't believe it. Then, I heard about Cantor Fitzgerald, and I wept. Not for the first time.

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Some of my friends saw it happen. They're shaky. I'm not doing particularly well even now.